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THE  
DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY  
AS TAUGHT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

A DISCOURSE  
DELIVERED IN THE CAVENDISH ROOMS, LONDON, ENGLAND,  
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 11, 1875.

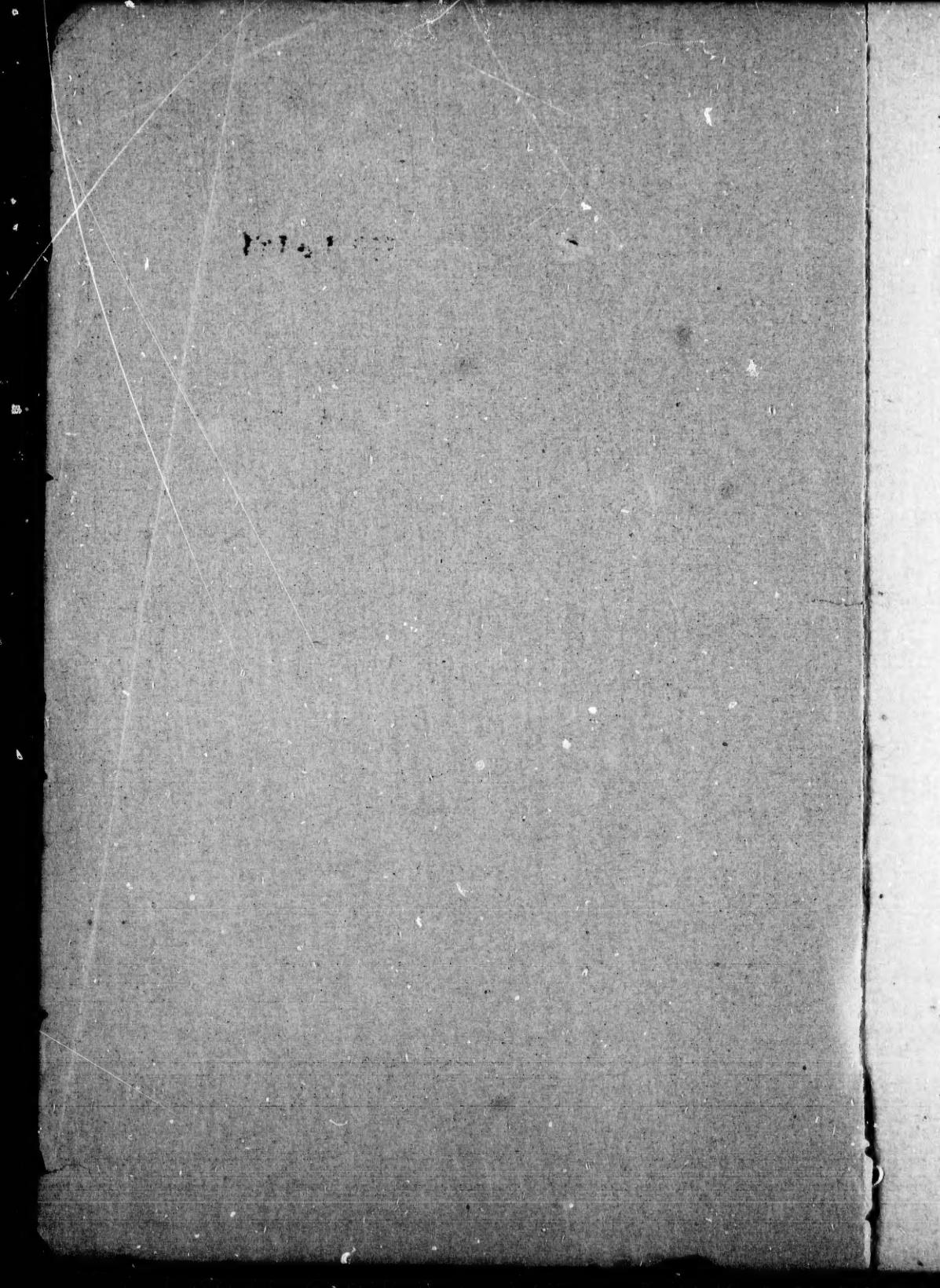
BY THE  
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Etc., etc.*

"*Omnia profecti, cum se a cœlestibus rebus referet ad humanas, excelsius  
magnificentiusque et dicet et sentiet.*" — Cicero.

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# THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY

## AS TAUGHT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.\*

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"Then shall the dust return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—*Ecclesiastes* xii., 7.

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THE Jews are a mere handful of people, and are deprived of home, of country, and of nationality. At no period of the world's history were they intellectually great or numerically powerful. To-day they are scattered over the face of the earth and are to be met with in every nation under heaven. They mingle with us in our everyday life, speak our language, mix in our social festivities, trade with us, sit in our legislative assemblies, and act as good citizens generally. Yet they remain distinct from us, they preserve those characteristics by which they were recognized thousands of years ago, and in numbers they appear neither to increase nor diminish, at least not to any extent worth naming. They have outlived the rise and fall of mighty empires, and witnessed the decline and fading away of powerful races and great peoples. Solitary spectators themselves unchanged, they have gazed on the ebb and flow of the tidal wave of civilisation as it has passed over one land after another and then receded again, leaving darkness and ignorance to return. Now, how are we to explain the fact of the marvellous preservation of this race of people amidst such strange vicissitudes, and the still more extraordinary fact that the literature produced by them in the earlier period of their history has come to occupy the position which it does

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\* Preached in the Cavendish Rooms, London, England, on July 11th, 1875.

in the world? The books of the Old Testament sprung from this insignificant and obscure people,—a fact which utterly defies explanation, except upon the ground taken by Christians in general, that the agency at work in the case has been more than human. To enter at length upon this subject, however, it is not my intention on the present occasion, but I make these introductory remarks to show what interest attaches to the teaching of these inspired records upon every conceivable question.

Whether the doctrine of a future life is taught in the Old Testament is a question upon which much has been written at different times, and to the discussion of which some of the greatest minds have bent their powers. The conclusions arrived at are somewhat diverse, according to the light in which the subject has been viewed, and the tone of the mind which has been brought to bear upon it. Amongst the opinions that have been entertained with regard to this matter, I may name three, as follows:—

1.—A great number of the Rationalists at the present time maintain that the doctrine of a future life is nowhere taught in the Old Testament. I am not aware that any one who believed in the inspiration and divine authority of the book has ever taken this view, but still as it has been held by scholars who profess to judge of the teachings of the Bible as they would of the contents of any other volume, it is certainly worthy of consideration. Bishop Warburton\* laboured hard to show that not only did Moses omit the doctrine of a future life entirely from his teaching, but that an argument in favour of the Divine authority of his mission was to be deduced from that fact. The Bishop, however, would have been the first to admit that at a later period of the Jewish history, some glimpse of immortality was obtained by that people, from whatever source it might have come, and that an intimation of the fact is to be found in the books which appeared after Moses's time. And there are persons still living, who, following Dr. Priestly, profess to hold by Christianity, and yet deny the immortality of the soul, believing that the future state is to be realised only after the resurrection of the material body. Such people of

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\* Divine Legation of Moses.

course would not discover the separate existence of spirit either in the Old or the New Testament, but they would, nevertheless, find in both, the doctrine of the Resurrection plainly set forth. They, therefore, could not be considered as belonging to the class to which I referred, of those who maintain that no kind of immortality was known to the ancient Hebrews.

The arguments advanced by those who deny that the doctrine of a future life is taught in the Old Testament, are based mainly upon two or three passages, which, taken by themselves, seem to point to the grave as the final termination of human existence, and upon the fact that the words in the Hebrew which have been translated soul, spirit, and so on, do not necessarily imply the separate existence of any so-called spiritual portion of man. The term *רוח Ruach*, the Hebrew word for spirit, is very frequently used in the sense of breath or air, as in fact is the Greek word *πνευμα* and the synonymous terms in almost every language; and the other Hebrew word, *נפש Nephesh*, which is usually translated soul, is repeatedly employed to describe the entire person; just as we use its English equivalent to-day, when we say, there was not a single soul in the place, meaning thereby, not that spirits were not there, but that no persons were present. In all languages the words used to describe spirit are terms which are often applied to material things, and which do not necessarily, therefore, when employed, imply that a spiritual being is spoken of. Our English word is applied in common to the immortal part of man, and to a fluid, productive of anything but spiritual results. The Latin term is used in the same way, and the Greek word frequently signifies air, as is evidenced by the circumstance that the science which deals with the air is called pneumatics at the present time. The fact, therefore, that *נפש Nephesh*, and *רוח Ruach*, and other Hebrew terms, which I shall refer to presently, are sometimes used to describe material things, by no means proves that they are not on other occasions employed, and correctly, to set forth spiritual existence.

2.—The great bulk of orthodox Christians hold that the doctrine of a future life is taught unmistakably and in the

plainest language throughout the whole of the Old Testament books. They maintain that the Jews from the earliest period of their history were perfectly familiar with the fact not only that there is a life after death, but that the future state is one of retribution, designed for the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice.

3.—Somewhat intermediate between these two sets of opinions, may be found a third which teaches that a general belief in the reality of a future life prevailed amongst the ancient Hebrews, but that the teachings respecting it in the Old Testament were extremely vague and indefinite, and that the region itself was one of gloom, silence, and darkness, and peopled with shadowy and unsubstantial ghosts. The Hebrew word רֶפְאִים Rephaim, which is used frequently to describe the *manes* of the dead, denotes, they tell us, mere *Umbræ* or shadows, and that etymologically it signifies relaxed and weak. Isaiah, bursting forth in his heart-stirring lyric addressed to the Babylonian monarch, exclaims, “Hell [that is *Sheol*, the land of spirits] from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead [Rephaim] for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?”\* Alger, whose work on the *Future Life* cannot be too highly spoken of, and who seems himself to cling to the idea that the spirit-world as recognised by the ancient Hebrews was exceedingly shadowy and unsubstantial, remarks, “These ghosts are described as being nearly as destitute of sensation as they are of strength. They are called ‘The inhabitants of the land of stillness.’ They exist in an inactive, partially torpid state, with a dreamy consciousness of past and present, neither suffering, nor enjoying, and seldom moving. Herder says of the Hebrews, ‘The sad and mournful images of their ghostly realm disturbed them, and were too much for their self-possession.’ Respecting these images, he adds, ‘Their voluntary force and energy were destroyed. They were feeble as a shade, without distinction of members, as a nerveless breath. They

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\* *Isaiah* xiv., 9, 10.

wandered and flitted in the dark nether world.' This 'wandering and flitting,' however, is rather the spirit of Herder's poetry than of that of the Hebrews; for the whole tenor and drift of the representations in the Old Testament show that the state of disembodied souls is deep quietude. Freed from bondage, pain, toil, and care, they repose in silence. The ghost summoned from beneath by the Witch of Endor, said, 'Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?' It was, indeed, in a dismal abode that they took their long quiet; but then it was in a place 'where the wicked ceased from troubling, and the weary were at rest.'\* Solomon declares and gives it as a reason for energy in this life, that "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."† Job, in bitter despair, asks, "Why died I not from the womb? . . . For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest."‡ And in Isaiah we meet with such language as this: "Thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."§ These passages, and others of a similar kind, have been frequently quoted to prove that the world of spirits, as believed in by the ancient Hebrews, was a region of darkness, silence, gloom, and total inactivity, corresponding in the sense of the repose, but not in that of the gloom, with the Buddhists' *Nirvana*. The last passage evidently refers in some manner to the calling up of the spirits of the dead by the art of necromancy; it having been imagined at that time that spirits so summoned could only speak in a whisper. Whether the shadowy and unsubstantial region thus imagined, constitutes in reality the spiritual world of the Old Testament, we shall see as we proceed. Certain it is that an existence in a land where no light shines, no harmonious sounds break through, and no events occur to relieve the everlasting monotony and gloom, would be little worth the having, and would be no place to look forward to with joyful hope and anxious expectation, as a crowning reward for one's labour when "life's fitful fever" is over,

\* *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life.* By W. R. ALGER, p. 153.

† *Ecclesiastes ix., 10.*      ‡ *Job iii., 11, 13.*      § *Isaiah xxix., 4.*

and the cares and turmoils of this mortal state brought to a close.

"It is a land of shadows : yea the land  
Itself is but a shadow, and the race  
That dwell therein are voices, forms of forms,  
And echoes of themselves."

In discussing this question we shall first of all glance at the teachings of the Old Testament, as they would present themselves to any person in whose hands the book was placed, who might be totally unacquainted with its history and purpose. Secondly, consider some extraneous facts that may help us to a better understanding of the question; and, thirdly, consider the light which Christianity throws upon the whole subject.

#### I.—THE TEACHINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AS THEY WOULD BE UNDERSTOOD BY A STRANGER IGNORANT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN, &c.

That there are a number of passages in the Old Testament Scriptures which would appear at first sight to lead to the conclusion that the grave is the final end of man's career, that there is no life beyond the tomb, and that such reward as virtue brings, or punishment entailed by vice, will be limited entirely to the present state of existence, it would be mere folly to deny. But then what we have to ascertain is, what is the general tenor of the teachings of the book, and whether we are quite sure that even these passages, which seem to shut out the light of immortality, are not susceptible of some other interpretation than that which would be put upon them by the mere superficial glance of a common-place reader. For instance, if in the same books in which these passages occur that seem to point to death as the final end of man, there are others which unmistakably set forth the doctrine of a future life, then it is quite clear that the meaning that would appear on the surface of one or the other must be incorrect. For, bear in mind, it is not a question of contradiction between the teachings of men who lived at different times and under entirely different circumstances, but an inconsistency on the part of the same man, which it would be absurd to suppose could exist even in the case of a person of very

ordinary intelligence, putting inspiration entirely out of the question. In Job we read, "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more."\* Yet in this same book we are told that "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding,"† that the spirit has a separate existence, and can appear in a disembodied form,‡ and that a state of retribution exists in the future, as is evident from innumerable threats to the wicked to be found distributed throughout the book. They are "driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world."§ They open their eyes in death to discover that they are not, and terrors take hold on them in consequence.|| The hope of the hypocrite is destroyed "when God taketh away his soul;"¶ and in that memorable passage, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c.,\*\* despite all the differences of opinion with regard to its real meaning, and the various readings in different versions, there is, when everything has been conceded that is claimed by rationalistic commentators, still an unmistakable indication of a future state, where the toils and sorrows of this life shall meet with their due reward. Now, whoever was the author of this book, or in whatever age it was written—for both are unknown—it is clear that he was a firm believer in the doctrine of a future life, and that any passages which seem to teach the contrary must in common fairness be interpreted according to this fact. Nor shall we find any great difficulty in doing this. In the quotation that I have already made, which states that they that go down to the grave shall come up no more, the meaning becomes clear if the next verse is read: "He shall return no more to his house; neither shall his place know him any more."†† Then again, in the writings of Solomon, there are two or three passages which are repeatedly quoted to show that the doctrine of a future life formed no part of the belief of that inspired teacher:—"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-

\* Job vii. 9.

† Job iv. 15.

|| Job xxvii. 19, 20.

\*\* Job xix. 25-27.

† Job xx. 11. 8.

§ Job xviii. 18.

¶ Job xxvii. 8.

†† Job vii. 10.

eminence above a beast : for all is vanity. All go unto one place ; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”\* “For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything ; neither have they any more a reward ; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished ; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun.”† But then in this very book we have the clearest possible indication of a future life in the words of the text, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”‡ And in the Book of Proverbs the light shines so distinctly in reference to this topic upon nearly every page, that it is almost impossible for any one to read a single chapter without discovering that the future state of retribution must have been uppermost in the mind of the author :—“The fear of the Lord tendeth to life, and he that hath it shall abide satisfied.”§ “The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”|| “In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death.”¶ “To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.”\*\* And on the other hand, of the wicked it is said, they are reserved “for the day of evil,” that “though hand join in hand” they “shall not be unpunished,”†† they are “broken without remedy,”†† and overthrown by God “for their wickedness”§§ and “shall remain in the congregation of the dead.”||| Nothing can be more clear, therefore, than that Solomon believed firmly in a future state of reward and punishment, and that consequently such passages as seem to teach the contrary must be susceptible of an interpretation that is in accordance with that fact. The one thing that befalleth the man and the beast is death. As the one dieth so dieth the other, and they have both one breath. As a matter of fact this is strictly true, and equally true is it that, in this respect, the one has no pre-eminence above the other. As far as their

\* *Ecclesiastes* iii., 19, 20.

|| *Proverbs* iv., 18.

†† *Proverbs* vi., 15.

† *Ecclesiastes* ix., 6, 6.

¶ *Proverbs* xii., 28.

§§ *Proverbs* xxi., 12.

‡ *Ecclesiastes* xli. 7.

\*\* *Proverbs* xi., 18.

||| *Proverbs* xxi., 16.

§ *Proverbs* xix., 23.

†† *Proverbs* xvi., 4, 5.

material organization is concerned, both are of dust, and both will return to the earth from which they came. There, however, the comparison ends, for the writer immediately goes on to say, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"\* pointing unmistakably to the great difference between man and the lower animals in his spiritual character, notwithstanding the similarity of his material organization to theirs.

1.—Innumerable passages are scattered throughout the whole of the books of the Old Testament wherein the doctrine of a future life, if not expressly stated, is most unquestionably implied. At the very commencement of the record we meet with a description which involves a wide difference between man and the lower animals. Of the latter it is simply said, that they were made, whilst of the former, the process of his creation is distinctly described. In addition to the shaping of his material body from the dust of the earth, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul,"† a point of difference between him and the highest of the inferior animals which must not be overlooked. Although I am perfectly well aware that it does not say that he received an immortal spirit, but that he became a living soul, שֶׁבֶת, still the very fact that language of so different a character is used in reference to his creation to that which we find employed concerning the calling into being of every other organic thing, shows unmistakably that there is a wide gulf placed between the two which it is impossible to bridge over. Moreover, of man it is said that he was formed in the image of God,‡ which clearly implies his possession of spiritual powers, that alone could bear comparison with the Eternal Being, whose child he was, in a sense which did not apply to any other part of creation. Then, after the Deluge, the mandate that went forth against the shedding of man's blood, and the threat which accompanied it, were based upon this very fact of the creation of man in God's image. "Whoso shedeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man."§

\* *Ecclesiastes* iii., 21.

† *Genesis* ii., 7.

‡ *Genesis* i., 27.

§ *Genesis* ix., 6.

Terms such as these clearly express a superiority of man to the lower animals, which no conformation of his physical frame, erect posture, or even superior intellect, can adequately represent, but must be sought for only in that moral and religious nature which allies him to divinity, constitutes him a spiritual being, and makes him a child of God, and an heir of immortality. With such teaching as this before them, the ancient Israelites must have had some glimpses of their spiritual nature and of the future life.

The expressions used in reference to the death of the Patriarchs in the book of Genesis teach, I think, clearly the doctrine of a future state. Of Abraham, it is said that he "gave up the ghost," and "was gathered to his people."\* The first term clearly implies the existence of something which was separated from the material body at death, and is the equivalent of the expression used by Stephen in his last memorable prayer, when being about to die for the faith he had cherished, he looked up to heaven and exclaimed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,"† and the second sets forth the doctrine of a future life, inasmuch as Abraham's body was not buried with his people, but in a strange land far away from that where the bones of his ancestors reposed. Of Ishmael, it is also declared that "he gave up the ghost and was gathered unto his people,"‡ and precisely the same terms are applied to Isaac,§ and with very slight variation to Jacob.|| In all these cases the giving up of the ghost is clearly expressive of the separation of the soul from the body, and the being gathered to their people implies not the burial, for it takes place before the act of interment, but the rejoining of their ancestors in the region of disembodied spirits of which I shall have more to say presently. God is called "the God of the spirit of all flesh,"¶ an expression which clearly implies some sort of spiritual resemblance between God and the human soul—a fact which is also made more apparent in the Hebrew form of oath which we so constantly meet with in the Old Testament, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth."\*\* It is difficult to understand this oath, except upon the principle

\* *Genesis xxv., 8.*    † *Genesis xxv., 17.*    || *Genesis xl ix., 38.*    \*\* *1 Samuel xxv., 26.*

† *Acts vii., 59.*    § *Genesis xxxv., 29.*    ¶ *Numbers xxvii., 16.*

that man is a spiritual being, and was understood to be such by the persons who employed this form of speech, and with whom it was considered so weighty and important. Moses in one of the most awful interviews between himself and Jehovah, prays that if God will not forgive the grievous sin which Israel had committed, his own name might be blotted out of the book which the Lord had written\*—a fact which seems to imply on his part not only a knowledge of a future state, but of the book of life, in which the names should be recorded of those who were considered worthy of inheriting the “many mansions,” to be more clearly described at a later period, when life and immortality should be brought to light by the Gospel. How in the face of all these passages, and others of a similar kind which I have not time to quote, Bishop Warburton could have come to the conclusion that the doctrine of a future life was not taught in the books of Moses, it is exceedingly difficult to understand.

In the later writings of the Old Testament the doctrine is more clearly set forth : “ He [Jehovah] will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness.”† These words are melodiously poured forth in that sublime song of Hannah ; they are pregnant with solemn meaning, and can only find their full realisation in the great hereafter. The same remark may apply to David’s momentous warning to his son Solomon, that if he forsook the God of his fathers, he would be cast off for ever ;‡ a penalty which I think must have had far more serious meaning than could be involved in any mere temporal consequences of his act. In the Psalms of David, the passages which set forth the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous, are so numerous, that the mere reference to them would occupy far more time than I have to devote to the entire subject. “ The way of the ungodly shall perish,”§ and “ the way everlasting ”|| is reserved for the righteous ; whilst that God shall render unto “ every man according to his work,”¶ is taught, again and again, in the very plainest possible language. “ Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory,”\*\* is a form of prayer which is

\* *Exodus xxxii., 82.*

† *1 Chronicles, xxviii., 9.*

|| *Psalm cxxxix., 24.*

‡ *1 Samuel ii., 9.*

§ *Psalm i., 6.*

¶ *Psalm lxii., 12.*

\*\* *Psalm lxxiii., 24.*

scarcely compatible with the belief that existence is to terminate at death; and the expression, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness,"\* points unmistakably to a land beyond the tomb where righteousness shall be the portion of its inhabitants, and the immediate presence of God their joy for ever. Isaiah declares that the Lord "will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces;"† and in a still more remarkable passage, apostrophising Judah, he exclaims: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise."‡ In Ezekiel innumerable passages occur, which by the strictest exegesis seem to point unmistakably to a future state of retribution for deeds done in the body. The valley of dry bones—the innumerable visions—and the oft-repeated announcement, that "the soul that sinneth it shall die,"§ but that they who turn from their sins, "and do that which is lawful and right," "shall surely live," and "shall not die," and that God hath no "pleasure at all that the wicked should die,"|| are all based upon the doctrine of the certainty of a future life, and without it would be meaningless and void. In Daniel, there is the unmistakable prediction of the stone that was to be "cut out of the mountain without hands," which "brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold" of the great image, and which was indicative of the kingdom to be set up by the God of heaven, and never to be destroyed,¶ at the commencement of which, "one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."\*\* There is also the prediction of the time to come, when "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and ever-

\* *Psalms xvii.*, 15.

† *Isaiah xxvi.*, 19.

|| *Ezekiel xviii.*, 21-23.

† *Isaiah xxv.*, 8.

§ *Ezekiel xviii.*, 20.

¶ *Daniel ii.*, 44, 45.

\*\* *Daniel vii.*, 13, 14.

lasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."\* It would seem that there could hardly be any mistake about the meaning of passages of this kind, wherein the consummation of all things and the immortality of man are so plainly set forth that the greater and more noble Revelation of Christianity seems to be almost anticipated. In Hosea, we have the following, the meaning of which would seem to be tolerably clear: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."† And Malachi sounds the final note of alarm with regard to the "great and terrible day of the Lord," which "shall burn as an oven," "and all that do wickedly shall be stubble," to be burnt up; while to those who fear the name of God "shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings."‡

"Let earth dissolve—yon ponderous orb descend  
And grind us into dust—the soul is safe!  
The man emerges—mounts above the wreck,  
As towering flame from Nature's funeral pyre."§

2.—The fact of a belief in a future life amongst the ancient Israelites may be inferred from the practice of necromancy, so common amongst them at the time when the Scriptures were written that special prohibitions were again and again put forth with regard to the custom. The term necromancy means to consult with or practise divination by means of the dead, being derived from *νεκρος* dead, and *μαντικη* divination. It will be at once apparent to the most superficial reasoner that the practice of applying for advice or information to those who were in the grave and in a state of unconsciousness would be absurd in the extreme. Clearly, therefore, the belief must have prevailed, where this practice existed, that the deceased person was in a condition to receive communications, to understand what was said to him, and to respond. I need not here refer to the numerous passages in Scripture in which this practice is mentioned, but may content myself with simply

\* Daniel xii., 2, 3.

+ Hosea xiii., 14.

† Malachi iv.

§ Dr. Young.

quoting the one which is better known probably than any of the others, that of the calling up Samuel by the woman of Endor. "In this case you will recollect Saul, in a great state of despair, sought out a woman who was in the habit secretly of practising divination, with a view to ascertain his fate in the future. He had already, it seemed, enquired of the Lord by the usually appointed methods, but had received no answer, "neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets," and, consequently, in his extreme anxiety he set at defiance the Mosaic law, and sought out a woman who had a familiar spirit. Having sworn to her that no evil should befall her in consequence of her practice of an art so strongly prohibited, and which he himself had previously taken active steps to suppress, she asked the question, "Whom shall I bring up unto thee?" and he said bring me up Samuel."<sup>†</sup>

The consequence of this was, as you know, that Samuel came and delivered to Saul the unwelcome intelligence that the kingdom was rent from him and given to David, and that on the following day the king and his sons should join the prophet in the land of spirits. Now, the whole of this scene becomes absurd, upon the principle that at the time at which it was said to have occurred the people who took an active part in the events herein chronicled had no belief in the separate existence of the spirit after death. There is an opinion largely entertained that the woman was simply an impostor, having no power whatever over the dead, and that the practice of divination in those times was of a character analogous to the conjuring and fortune-telling of to-day. But even if this were so, it would in no sense affect the question under consideration, because a belief in necromancy would be still necessarily implied in the event. Clearly it was not the body of Samuel that came up, for that was buried at Ramah, more than sixty miles from Endor. Various conflicting opinions are entertained by commentators as to the real nature of this apparition. The Rev. John Browne maintains that it is absurd to imagine that God would raise a man from the dead to give information to Saul, seeing that He had refused to answer him by the

\* 1 Samuel xxviii., 6.

† 1 Samuel xxviii., 11.

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ordinary methods ; and holds, consequently, that if there was an appearance at all, it was probably the devil in the likeness of Samuel.\* Bishop Horne held a somewhat similar view, and thought that the apparition was the result of the interposition of Providence unexpectedly to the woman, and hence her surprise and alarm when she saw it. Stackhouse, dealing with the conflicting opinions of commentators, thinks the most probable explanation is that a delusion was practised on Saul by some person whom the woman had employed to aid her in the deception.† Upon any such principle as this, however, it is exceedingly difficult to account for the accuracy of the prediction. Farmer, in his *Dissertation on Miracles*, discusses the question at great length. According to his view, it resolves itself into—“(1) Whether the whole was not the work of human imposture, the artful sorceress making the credulous monarch believe that she saw an apparition when she really saw none ; at the same time so managing her voice as to deceive Saul into a belief that he received his answer from Samuel, and, (2) whether God did not rather raise Samuel, or present a likeness or image of him to Saul to denounce the Divine judgment against him, for the crime he was then committing in thus communicating with a reputed sorceress ?”‡ Farmer himself clings to the latter theory. A very similar view was held by Dr. Samuel Clarke, who thought that God permitted a likeness of Samuel to appear in reproof of Saul’s wickedness.§ Josephus, no mean authority upon questions connected with Jewish thought, maintains that it was really the spirit of Samuel who came at the command of the woman, an opinion acquiesced in by some of the ablest expositors of Scripture. It is quite unimportant, however, for my present purpose, which of the numerous views that have been held at different times by various commentators be adopted. The whole thing may have been a juggle on the part of the woman, the appearance the result of contrivance or collusion, and the voice accomplished by means of ventriloquism ; or the apparition that came may have been some other spirit which personated the dead prophet ;

\* Browne's *Dictionary of the Bible*, II., p. 423. † *A Dissertation on Miracles*, p. 349.

‡ *Vide Note on the Passage in Mants' Bible.* § *Clarke's Sermons*, X., p. 287.

or it may have been really Samuel. In any case it is quite certain that the prevailing opinions of the day lent countenance to the reality of the transaction. Whether necromancy were an imposition, a delusion, or a reality, it is quite certain that it was universally believed in, and that is all that is necessary for me to prove for my present purpose. The doctrine of a future state, and the separate existence of the soul after death, are involved in this belief.

3.—The belief in the separate existence of the soul after death may be inferred from the terms employed by the Hebrews to describe the abode of the departed. Whenever they speak of the grave as the narrow resting-place for the worn-out material frame, they use the terms בָּרֶךְ *Bor*, and קִבְּרֶךְ *Kibor*, while the residence of the dead is indicated by a totally different word, שְׁאֹלֶת *Sheol*. I have already pointed out that when it was said of the ancients that they were gathered to their fathers, it did not mean that they were buried in the same graveyard, for that seldom occurred in the instances mentioned, but that the departing spirit rejoined its ancestors in the region of disembodied souls. David, mourning the loss of his infant child, took consolation in the fact that they should meet again hereafter. He exclaims, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”\* Clearly this could not mean the rejoining him in the grave, where both would be in a state of unconsciousness, since no consolation could be drawn from such a circumstance. The expression is analogous to those which I have already quoted in reference to Abraham and others, that they gave up the ghost and were gathered to their people. Jacob says, “I will go down into שְׁאֹלֶת *Sheol* unto my son mourning.”† The term in this passage is translated “grave” in our authorized version, but clearly incorrectly, since he could not mean that he would be buried in the earth with Joseph, for he believed him to have been torn to pieces by wild beasts. *Sheol* was in fact regarded by the Hebrews as the under-world, consisting of an immense region probably in the interior of the earth, in which were assembled the spirits of all who had passed away by death. The term, according to the best lexicographers, has three meanings—(1.) To pray for or

\* 2 Samuel xii., 23.

+ Genesis xxxvii., 35.

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petition for anything. (2.) To ask for the purpose of borrowing, or to solicit advice ; and (3.) The general abode of the dead. In the last sense it is used sixty-six times in the Old Testament, thirty-two of which have been translated hell, thirty-one grave, and three pit. The first, meaning, to pray for, petition, or ask, has been supposed to have some reference to the state of the dead, "from the notion of demanding, since rapacious Orcus lays claim unsparingly to all ; or, as others have fancifully construed it, the object of universal enquiry, the unknown mansion, concerning which all are anxiously inquisitive." But, however that may be, it is clear that there can be no mistake about the last of the three meanings. This region was, doubtless, shadowy and full of gloom, pervaded by darkness, its awful silence unbroken ; and through its subterraneous domains flitted the unsubstantial *manes* of the dead ; but it was a land of spirits notwithstanding, and formed the abode of all who passed from earth by death. Of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Moses said that the earth should "open her mouth and swallow them up," and that they should "go down quick into the pit," i.e., they should descend alive into *Sheol*.\* In the rejoicing of Hannah at having given birth to a son, she exclaims, "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to *Sheol* and bringeth up."† When David had handed over the government to his son Solomon, he informed him that he was about to die, and "go the way of all the earth ;" and in charging him what to do, he desires him not to let the hoary head of Joab go down to *Sheol* in peace ;‡ and to bring down the hoary head of Shimei to *Sheol* with blood.§ In Job the ways of God are declared to be as high as heaven and deeper than hell,|| i.e., higher than the fretted canopy of stars, and deeper than *Sheol*, the innermost recesses of the earth. Job prays to God to hide him in *Sheol* till His wrath be past, in a most remarkable passage, since it seems to imply his belief in some kind of resuscitation from the land of death.

\* *Numbers* xvi., 30.

† *1 Samuel* ii., 6.

‡ *1 Kings* ii., 6.

§ *1 Kings* ii., 9.

|| *Job* xi., 8.

O that Thou wouldest hide me in *Sheol*,  
 That Thou wouldest conceal me till Thy wrath be averted,  
 That Thou wouldest appoint me a fixed time and remember me.  
 Though a man die, shall he not revive?  
 All the days of my appointed time will I wait  
 Till my renovation come.  
 Thou shalt call and I will answer Thee,  
 Thou shalt desire the work of Thy hands.\*

Dr. Lindsay Alexander remarks very appropriately, in reference to these remarkable words of Job—remarkable because of the great antiquity of the book:—"In this passage we have the patriarch imploring death; but at the same time intimating that it is only for a season that he desires or expects to be in the separate state. He prays for a definite time to be fixed, at the close of which he might be remembered; and by way of confirming the expectation implied in this, he boldly asks, 'Though a man die, shall he not revive?' Supported by this assurance, he declares his readiness to remain in the disembodied state as long as the appointed interval shall last; and concludes by triumphantly uttering his assurance that God would call him from the sleep of the tomb, and thereby exhibit the regard which he entertained towards that body which was the work of His hands. Such I take to be, upon the whole, the most natural and consistent explanation of this remarkable passage."† David, speaking of the omnipresence of Jehovah, exclaims, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in *Sheol* behold, thou art there;" ‡ i.e., Whether I climb the vast expanse of the heavens overhead, or penetrate into the deepest chambers of the under-world, I cannot escape from thy presence; and in a still more appropriate passage, prefiguring forth the future Messiah, he exclaims, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in *Sheol*, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."§ In Isaiah we read that "Hell [*Sheol*] hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure,"|| which simply means that the famine and disease have enlarged the domains of death and peopled the region of the shades. The constant

\* *Job* xiv., 13-15.

† *Connexion and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments*, p. 125.

‡ *Psalm* cxxxix., 8.      § *Psalm* xvi., 10.      || *Isaiah* v., 14.

use of this word שָׁאֹל Sheol, in contradistinction to בָּרְאָה Bor, and קִבְרָה Kibor, shows unmistakably a knowledge of a future state in the ancient Jewish Church.

4.—The separate existence of the soul is taught in the various terms used in the Old Testament to describe the spirit, and the distinction between it and the material body. “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body,”\* is language which could only be employed by one who believed that not only were the spirit and body distinct, but that the latter formed a sort of material envelope with which the former was invested. “With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early,”† indicates a mode of speaking by no means compatible with the opinion that soul is only another name for body, and spirit synonymous with the air exhaled from the lungs. The Hebrew words in the Old Testament translated soul and spirit, I am free to admit, do not always refer to the immaterial and immortal part of man, for like their equivalents in all languages, they are sometimes applied to material things. Nevertheless there are a sufficient number of instances in which they are used in what must be regarded as their true legitimate sense, to prevent anyone who is careful to investigate their real meaning from falling into any error on this subject. I have not time, of course, to enter at length into an explanation of the whole of these terms, but I will glance briefly at the three principal words used to describe the immortal part of man in the Old Testament. The term נֶפֶש Nephesh I have already stated is like our word soul, sometimes used to describe the entire person, yet there are passages in which it is utterly impossible so to understand it, and in which it points unmistakably to a portion of the human being distinct from the material organization and existing somewhere after death. Elijah in raising the son of the widow of Zarephath, “stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord and said, Oh, Lord, my God ! I pray Thee let this child’s soul [שְׁאָל Sheol] come into him again,”‡ language which clearly sets forth that the child’s soul had left the body and must return again ere resuscitation could take place. The term

\* Daniel xvii., 15.

† Isaiah xxvi., 9.

‡ 1 Kings xvii., 21.

**רֶפָאִים Rephaim** is, as I have already stated, another word used to describe the ghosts of the departed. We meet with it in Proverbs, used as follows: "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead" \* [Rephaim]. **נֶשֶׁמַה Neshemah** is used to describe the Spirit of God, and also the spirit of man as created and sustained by God. It occurs in the passage in which the creation of man is first described, and the breath of life [Neshemah] is breathed into his nostrils. † The most important term, however, that is used in the Old Testament to describe the spirit of man is **רוּחַ Ruach**. For although, as has been stated, this, like its Greek equivalent, is sometimes applied to the air or the breath, yet in numerous instances where it occurs it is clear that it can only refer to the soul as an existence separate from the body. In Job we read, "Then a spirit [Ruach] passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: there was silence, an image was before mine eyes, and I heard a voice," &c. ‡ If there were no other passage to be found in the whole of the Old Testament but this one, it would assuredly be sufficiently definite, with regard to the separate existence of the soul, and its capability of being seen and heard when separated from the material body. There are, however, numbers of other passages of precisely the same character to be found scattered throughout the book, The spirit (Ruach) of the man goeth upward, § and returneth to God who gave it. || "There is no man that hath power over the spirit [Ruach] to retain the spirit [Ruach]; neither hath he power in the day of death," ¶ a passage which points in the clearest possible manner to the separation of the spirit from the body on the occasion of the dissolution of the latter. We are also told that the Lord "formeth the spirit [Ruach] of man within him," \*\* which could hardly be said of the air or breath, since that exists altogether independent of human beings, and could in no case be said to be formed within the man. The term is also applied to spiritual

\* Proverbs xxi., 16.

† Genesis ii., 7.

‡ Job iv., 15, 16.

§ Ecclesiastes iii., 21.

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¶ Ecclesiastes viii., 8.

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existences which do not belong to the earth, and where there is therefore no possibility of giving to it the material significance which is frequently contended for. It is used of celestial messengers in the Psalms, where we are told that the Lord "maketh His angels spirits,"\* and of infernal ones in the case of the lying spirit that went out and deceived Ahab to his destruction.†

So unmistakably do these terms point to the separate existence of the soul, that there seems never to have been any difference of opinion about their meaning, as far as this point is concerned, among the ancient Hebrews. The Rabbins interpreted the texts in which they occur in all kinds of fanciful ways, but never dreamed of supposing that they could be limited in their meaning to the material body or its functions. The tendency of interpretation was quite in an opposite direction. So clearly did *Ruach*, and *Nephesh*, and *Neshemah* point to an individuality distinct from the material body, that the Rabbins occasionally fell into the error of supposing that each of them had a personality of its own, and that more than one separate existence remained for the same individual after death, some of them asserting that the destination of the *Nephesh* after the dissolution of the body was *Sheol*, that the *Ruach* returned to the air, and that the *Neshemah* made its way into heaven. One class supposed that certain people were supplied with a *Nephesh* without a *Ruach*, and that many more were destitute of a *Neshemah*; and another declared that the *Nephesh* ( $\psi\chi\eta$ ) was the soul of the body, *Ruach* ( $\Pi\nu\nu\mu\alpha$ ) the soul of the *Nephesh*, and *Neshemah* ( $\mathrm{No}\nu\zeta$ ) the soul of the *Ruach*.‡ Of course these fanciful theories were the product of a much later age, but they serve to show that when errors did creep into the interpretations of the Scriptures their tendency was directly the reverse of that of the modern so-called Rationalism. The teaching of the Old Testament is so plain on this subject, that one wonders how any person who had carefully perused the record should have come to any other conclusion than that which I have pointed out, viz., that

\* *Psalms civ., 4.*

† *2 Chronicles xviii.*

‡ "Tractatus de Anima, a R. Moscheh, Korduero. In Kabbala Denudata tom i., pars ii." *Vide Alger*, p. 167.

throughout the entire career of this ancient people they had a knowledge of the immortality of man, of the separate existence of the soul after death, and of, to some extent, the different destiny that awaits the righteous and the wicked in the future life.

## II.—SOME FACTS THAT MAY HELP US TO A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING AS TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT UPON THIS SUBJECT.

There are several facts which, when taken into consideration, may help us to a better understanding of this question, and such as would perhaps serve to guide us to a conclusive opinion, even were the direct teachings of the Old Testament much less explicit than they are. Two or three of these we will briefly glance at.

1.—In discussing the question as to what were the views of the ancient Hebrews respecting the future life, we must not lose sight of the fact that the doctrine of immortality, in some form or other, has been held by almost all people, in all ages, and therefore, to suppose that the only race of men to whom an especial Revelation was given were ignorant of so important a fact, is to imagine a state of things opposed altogether to sound reason, and to what we may conceive to have been the objects and purposes of Inspiration. Although it is quite true that the knowledge of a future life is sometimes but faintly shadowed forth in the beliefs of ancient peoples, yet nothing is more certain than that it is almost universally to be met with in some form or other. Among the Hindoos, Chinese, Persians Greeks, Romans, and even the barbarian nations, so deeply rooted in human nature is the aspiration after another life, that we invariably find it breaking forth in some kind of shape; sometimes in a form rude, fantastic, and extremely absurd, but nevertheless so real that there can be no mistaking its character. It would seem, therefore, to be a universal instinct of humanity, springing up everywhere in the breast of man, and being closely allied with that spirituality of his nature which stamps him human and makes him a child of the Omnipotent Father. This doctrine, therefore, which although in its fuller and more glorious sense was brought to light by the

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Gospel, we find distributed over all the ages, as a sort of dim shadow of the good things which were afterwards to be realised, it is impossible to suppose the ancient Hebrews could have been ignorant of, without doing violence to all our notions with regard to the purposes of Revelation, and the special end had in view in setting apart this peculiar people to be the favoured recipients of God's inspired truth. To imagine that they could be ignorant altogether of the knowledge of a future state, is really to suppose that, despite the Revelation which they had received, they were less informed upon one of the most essential features of the Revelation itself than those peoples who had nothing to guide them but their own natural faculties ; a supposition which it is difficult to see how anyone can entertain, who has bestowed any thought upon the subject.

2.—Amongst the ancient heathen nations there is hardly one to be named by whom the doctrine of a future life is more conspicuously set forth than by the Egyptians. Probably the greater number of the most intelligent classes of this people in ancient times held the doctrine of Metempsychosis ; but at no period of their history do we find them entertaining materialistic opinions. Whatever may have been the object had in view in that process of embalming the dead, which with them reached so high a degree of perfection, one thing is clear, that they never lost sight of the doctrine of immortality. This is evident from a variety of facts brought to light by modern investigations into Egyptology, through which we have obtained clearer views regarding the opinions of the Egyptians on the question of a future life than we possess respecting much more recent and, generally speaking, much better understood nations. Alger remarks, in reference to this very question, "Three sources of knowledge have been laid open to us. First, the papyrus rolls, one of which was placed in the bosom of every mummy. This roll, covered with hieroglyphics, is called the funeral ritual, or book of the dead. It served as a passport through the burial rites ; it contained the names of the deceased and his parents, a series of prayers he was to recite before the various divinities he would meet on his journey, and representations

of some of the adventures awaiting him in the unseen state.\* Secondly, the ornamental cases in which the mummies are enclosed are painted all over with scenes setting forth the realities and events to which the soul of the dead occupant has passed in the other life.† Thirdly, the various fates of souls are sculptured and painted on the walls in the tombs in characters which have been deciphered during the present century. ‡

Those mystic, stony volumes on the walls long writ,  
Whose sense is late reveal'd to searching modern wit.

Combining the information thus obtained, we learn that according to the Egyptian representation the soul is led by the god Thoth into Amenhe, the infernal world, the entrance to which lies in the extreme west, on the farther side of the sea, where the sun goes down under the earth. It was in accordance with this supposition that Herod caused to be engraved on a magnificent monument erected to his deceased wife, the line, 'Zeus, this blooming woman sent beyond the ocean.'§ At the entrance sits a wide-throated monster, over whose head is the inscription, 'This is the devourer of many who go into Amenhe, the lacerater of the heart of him who comes with sins to the house of justice.' The soul next kneels before forty-two assessors of Osiris, with deprecating asseverations and intercessions. It then comes to the final trial in the terrible Hall of the Two Truths, the approving and the condemning, or, as it is differently named, the Hall of the Double Justice, the rewarding and the punishing. Here the three divinities, Horus, Anubis, and Thoth, proceed to weigh the soul in the balance. In one scale an image of Thmei, the goddess of Truth, is placed; in the other a heart-shaped vase, symbolizing the heart of the deceased, with all the actions of his earthly life. Then happy is he

Who weighed 'gainst Truth, down dips the awful scale.

\* *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter*, edited, with an Introduction, by Dr. Lepsius.

† *Pettigrew's History of Egyptian Mummies*, chap. ix.

‡ Champollion's Letter, dated Thebes, May 16, 1829. An abstract of this letter may be found in *Stuart's Translation of Greppo's Essay on Champollion's Hieroglyphic System*. Appendix, Note N.

§ *Baaniage, History of the Jews*, lib. ii., chap. 12, sec. 19.

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Thoth notes the result on a tablet, and the deceased advances with it to the foot of the throne on which sits Osiris, lord of the dead, king of Amenthe. He pronounces the decisive sentence, and his assistants see that it is at once executed.\* Now, how is it possible to conceive that the ancient Hebrews should have come into such very close proximity to the Egyptians as we know they did, without becoming acquainted with the views they entertained respecting the future state. Certain it is that they could not have intermingled in their daily life, year after year, with people who not only had definite conceptions regarding immortality, but who made that belief apparent in their funeral obsequies and in customs connected with the dead that were of daily occurrence, without becoming acquainted with the fact that such a belief existed. The statement, therefore, made by certain classes of persons that the Israelites, after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, were altogether ignorant of the doctrine of a future life is preposterous in the extreme. Sceptical of immortality, it is possible to conceive them as having been, but uninformed respecting it they could not have been, after so many years' residence, and in the midst of a nation with whom it was one of the most conspicuous forms of faith.

3.—There is very much weight to be attached to the view put forward by Dean Stanley on this subject, that if an absence of plain and definite teaching respecting immortality is met with in the Old Testament, it is due, not to the fact that the doctrine was not known, but rather to the circumstance that it was so universally believed in, and so generally understood, that the inculcating it was superfluous. This view is strictly in keeping with our experience in modern times. Subjects about which there is no doubt are seldom spoken of, and doctrines universally received as true there is no necessity for teaching. I quote at length the passage from Dean Stanley bearing on this question, in order that you may judge of its full import. "The Jewish religion is characterised in an eminent degree by the dimness of its conception of a future life. From time to time there are glimpses of the hope of immortality. But for the most

\* *Critical History, &c., p. 103.*

part it is in the present life that the faith of the Israelite finds its full accomplishment. ‘The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; . . . the living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day.’\* It is needless to repeat here the elaborate contrast drawn out by Bishop Warburton in this respect, between the Jewish Scriptures and the religions of Paganism. Nor need we adopt the paradoxical expedient by which from this apparent defect he infers the Divine legation of Moses. But the fact becomes of real religious importance, if we trace the ground on which this silence respecting the future state was based. Not from want of religion, but (if one might use the expression) from excess of religion was this void left in the Jewish mind. The future life was not denied or contradicted—but it was overlooked, set aside, overshadowed by the consciousness of the living, actual presence of God Himself. That truth, at least in the limited conceptions of the youthful nation, was too vast to admit of any rival truth, however precious. When David or Hezekiah, as in the passages just quoted, shrank from the gloomy vacancy of the grave, it was because they feared lest, when death closed their eyes on the present world, they should lose their hold† on that Divine Friend, with whose being and communion the present world had in their minds been so closely interwoven. Such a sense of the overwhelming greatness and nearness of God, the root of feelings so peculiar as those which I have described, must have lain too deep in the national belief to have had its beginning in any later time than the epoch of Moses. It is the primary stratification of the religion. We should invert the whole order of the history, if we placed it amongst the secondary formations of subsequent ages.”‡ As you will easily understand, I do not myself consider that there is such a paucity of teaching with regard to this question as even Dean Stanley seems to imagine, but, in any case, whatever vagueness may be discovered about it is, I think, clearly explained by the suggestion which he throws out.

Taking these facts into consideration, then, the evidence

\**Isaiah xxxviii., 18, 19; Psalm xxxviii., 12.* † Ewald, *Geschichte ii., 121.*

‡ *History of the Jewish Church, Vol. I., p. 186.*

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in favour of Old Testament immortality becomes over-  
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can refute or sophistry explain away.

### III.—THE LIGHT THROWN UPON THE SUBJECT BY CHRISTIANITY.

Hitherto I have spoken of the Old Testament simply as a collection of ancient writings, and judged of the doctrines contained therein as they would present themselves to the mind of a person who looked at them entirely apart from the light of Christianity, and even then we have seen the great truth of immortality perpetually beaming forth. But the Old Testament is not to be judged of after this fashion. We hold it to be a portion of an inspired volume, the contents of which can only be accurately ascertained by taking it as a whole. Not exclusively intended for Jews was that revelation of the earlier dispensation, but also to serve as an introduction to the later and more glorious religion which should include within its embrace all the nations of the earth. Old Testament writers gave forth their utterances as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and no doubt their teachings were especially adapted to the times in which they were spoken; but there was nevertheless lying unrecognized in the language used a deep and hidden meaning only to be made thoroughly manifest in a later and more glorious age. The Rationalist will, of course, contend that we have no right to interpret Old Testament records in the light of New Testament explanations, that each book ought to be judged of by itself, and that we ought to seek no aid in the elucidation of its meaning, except such as can be gathered from the circumstances existing at the time and in the place of its production, and likely to influence the mind of its author. From his point of view this is correct enough, no doubt, but from ours it is utterly at fault. I have, however, met him on his own ground, and judged of the teachings of the Old Testament as I should judge of the contents of any other volume, and having done this, I have a perfect right now to look at its doctrines in the light reflected upon them by Christ and His religion. There can be no doubt that very frequently the meaning of

the utterances of the prophets of old was hidden, not only from the people whom they addressed, but even from themselves. Hence we find in the New Testament an interpretation put upon Old Testament Scriptures embodying a far deeper meaning than was ever seen in them by the people who lived in Old Testament times, and to whom they were spoken. Again and again do we meet with incidents in the life of our Lord which set forth the fact that something more than ordinary education and practical common sense was necessary to a right understanding of the Old Testament record. On one memorable occasion, after having predicted those frightful judgments that were to fall upon Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, He exclaimed, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."\* And after His resurrection, when He had explained to His disciples what had been written in the Scriptures respecting Himself, we are told that He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.† Here is the true method of interpreting the Old Testament. By this light alone can it be properly understood.

Now, if we take New Testament interpretations of Old Testament passages, we shall find the doctrine of a future life in hundreds of instances, where otherwise we should search for it in vain. When God appeared to Moses at the burning bush, His language was, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;"‡ language which would seem to imply nothing more than the special protection of the Almighty of the persons named. But our Lord taught that in these very words the doctrine of the future life was set forth, his interpretation of them in the following passage being clear and explicit:—"Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him."§ In the case of the rest pointed out to the

\* Matthew xi., 25, 26. † Luke xxiv., 45. ‡ Exodus iii., 6. § Luke xx., 37, 38.

early Israelites, it is spoken of simply as a promise of their future entrance into the favoured land of Canaan. Moses writes, "For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety."\* The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews gives to this promise a far wider signification, including within it all who seek after a knowledge of Christ's truth, and making its realization to be not the ancient Palestine, but the heavenly home prepared for all the chosen "people of God."† In the same way is explained, and by the same writer, the Old Testament statement that the Israelites were strangers ‡ and sojourners in the country through which they were passing to the more favoured land of promise, which is also shown to be typical of the pilgrimage through earth to the heavenly city, "whose builder and maker is God."§ Indeed we are especially told in this case that the full realization of the promise was not experienced by the people to whom it was first given, and that the language employed pointed unmistakably to the earthly path leading to the celestial home. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."|| Certain it is therefore that according to the interpretation of the New Testament the doctrine of a future life was unmistakably taught on almost every page of the Old. Many other passages might be quoted had I the time at my disposal for doing so, but these will suffice for the purpose. Here as well as everywhere else we learn that

"'Tis Heaven itself that points out an hereafter  
And intimates eternity to man."

The Old Testament record from beginning to end bears conclusive testimony to the firm faith of the people amongst whom it originated, in the great doctrine of immortality ; a

\* *Deuteronomy* xiii., 9, 10.

† *Hebrews* iv., 9.

‡ *Genesis* xxviii., 4.

§ *Hebrews* xi., 10.

|| *Hebrews* xi., 13.

doctrine which is to be met with in some form or other in all ages and amongst all peoples. In Christianity of course we find this great truth brought to light in all the glory of its fulness, shining out conspicuously like the mid-day sun. In the Old Testament it beams forth with the paler and borrowed light of the moon, and in other nations shines only with the fainter lustre of the stars ; but amongst all there is some light, however dim, guiding the traveller through the dark passage of death to the bright land which lies beyond. The reality of the spiritual world has been more or less felt wherever human beings have existed ; and every man who has reflected upon external nature, and the contrast between it and his own inner life, may have been led to address his soul in the sublime language of Addison :

“The stars shall fade away, the sun himself  
Grow dim with age, and Nature sink in years ;  
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,  
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,  
The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds.”

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W O R K S  
BY THE  
**REV. GEORGE SEXTON, M.A., M.D., LL.D.,**

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